

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TOKYO 09898 01 OF 02 010847Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 AS-01 /069 W
-----020427 010944Z /12

P R 010810Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9090
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 9898

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, JA
SUBJECT: NEW LIBERAL CLUB: ONE YEAR LATER

SUMMARY: IN ITS FIRST YEAR, YOHEI KONO'S NEW LIBERAL CLUB HAS SCORED IMPRESSIVE ELECTION GAINS, PLAYED SIGNIFICANT DIET ROLE, AND ATTRACTED WIDESPREAD PUBLIC SUPPORT. ALMOST ALL OF THIS IS DUE TO PARTY IMAGE, NOT POLICIES OR ORGANIZATION. NLC IS IDENTIFIED ALMOST COMPLETELY WITH KONO HIMSELF--YOUTHFUL, DYNAMIC, MODERATE CONSERVATIVE. CAN IT LAST? WE THINK SO AND, UNLESS KONO GETS HIT BY A TRUCK, WE BELIEVE NLC WILL PLAY INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE ON MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE TO US. KONO AND NLC ARE BASICALLY FRIENDLY TO AMERICA AND WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE WISE TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH HIM AND NLC. END SUMMARY.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TOKYO 09898 01 OF 02 010847Z

1. IT HAS BEEN A YEAR SINCE SIX YOUNGISH CONSERVATIVE DIET MEMBERS, LED BY YOHEI KONO (40), LEFT LDP TO FORM NEW LIBERAL CLUB (NLC). LOCKHEED, KONO TOLD US, MADE IT CLEAR THAT LDP COULD NOT OVERCOME ITS "CORRUPTION-PRONE" RELIANCE ON BIG BUSINESS AND THAT REAL POWER COULD NOT BE WRESTED FROM HANDFUL OF LDP ELDERS. IN THOSE MONTHS, FEW

TOOK NLC SERIOUSLY AND EVEN KONO WAS UNCERTAIN. HE HARBORED MISGIVINGS THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE MOVED PREMATURELY; POLITICAL FUNDS WERE SHORT; AND VIRTUALLY NO ORGANIZED SUPPORT EXISTED EXCEPT FOR THAT OF INDIVIDUAL NLC MEMBERS THEMSELVES.

2. BUT IF THERE WERE PROBLEMS, THERE WERE ALSO ADVANTAGES. MOST IMPORTANT, NLC IMAGE HAS FROM OUTSET BEEN IDENTIFIED ALMOST COMPLETELY WITH THAT OF YOHEI KONO HIMSELF: YOUTHFUL AND DYNAMIC, REPRESENTING VIEWS OF MODERATE LEFT WING OF CONSERVATIVES. THIS IMAGE HAD IMMEDIATE APPEAL TO MASS MEDIA AND YOUNGER URBAN ELECTORATE, NEARLY FIFTY PERCENT ON WHOM, ACCORDING TO RECENT POLLS, SUPPORT NO POLITICAL PARTY. NLC, AS REFORM-MINDED CONSERVATIVE ALTERNATIVE, ALSO BENEFITTED FROM WIDESPREAD DISAFFECTION WITH LDP AMONG CONSERVATIVE-ORIENTED VOTERS DURING FINAL STAGES OF LOCKHEED SCANDAL. EVEN NLC CANDIDATES WERE SURPRISED, HOWEVER, WHEN PARTY TOOK 4.2 PERCENT OF POPULAR VOTE AND SEVENTEEN SEATS IN DECEMBER 1976 LOWER HOUSE ELECTION. (IT WAS LATER JOINED BY ONE CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENT.) MORE THAN HALF OF SUCCESSFUL NLC CANDIDATES' VOTE APPARENTLY CAME AT EXPENSE OF LDP, BUT ALL OTHER PARTIES, INCLUDING JCP, LOST VOTES TO NLC IN ONE OR MORE DISTRICTS.

3. NLC LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS CONTINUE TO BE EXERCISED BY PARTY'S SIX FOUNDERS, BUT KONO'S PREEMINENCE ON POLICY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TOKYO 09898 01 OF 02 010847Z

MATTERS IS UNQUESTIONED. (FOR ORGANIZATION AND ELECTION ADVICE, YOUNGER NLC MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR TURN TO KONO'S SECRETARY ISAMU ISHIKAWA, AN LDP VETERAN WHO ALSO SERVED KONO'S FATHER). OF FOUNDERS, NLC SECGEN TAKEO NISHIOKA (40), DIET (AND ELECTION) POLICY CHAIRMAN TOSHIO YAMAGUCHI (36), AND NLC "ELDER" SEIICHI TAGAWA (58) HAVE ACHIEVED SOME PUBLIC PROMINENCE BUT HAVE NOT EXERCISED ANY INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVES. MOST "NEW" NLC DIETMEN, JUDGING FROM DINNER EMBOFFS HAD WITH SEVERAL SHORTLY AFTER THEIR ELECTION, ARE REMARKABLY UNINFORMED ABOUT SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES, AND SOME ARE REGARDED AS MEDIOCRITIES WHO RODE TO SUCCESS CLINGING TO KONO'S COATTAILS.

4. DEBATE CONTINUES OVER WHAT NLC STANDS FOR. THUS FAR THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY TWO VAGUE POLICY STATEMENTS. NLC "PLATFORM" CALLED FOR NEW "LIBERAL" ECONOMIC STRUCTURE. ESTABLISHMENT OF "OVERALL" SECURITY SYSTEM AND "STABLE" INTERNATIONAL ORDER; AND CREATION OF "OPEN, CITIZEN-CENTERED" POLITICAL ORGANIZATION. UPPER HOUSE ELECTION STATEMENT URGED ONLY SKETCHILY DEFINED "REFORM" OF UPPER HOUSE ITSELF, EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND GOJ ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE, ALONG WITH ATTENTION TO LONG-TERM ENERGY POLICY.

NLC HAS ALSO REACHED "INFORMAL" DECISION TO "SUPPORT" SECURITY TREATY (DISTINGUISHING ITSELF SLIGHTLY FROM LDP WHICH "FIRMLY SUPPORTS" MST).

5. TO FILL IN POLICY GAPS, ONE MUST FALL BACK ON WHAT IS KNOWN OF KONO'S PERSONAL VIEWS. HE HAS LONG BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH MOVES TOWARD PRC, HAS BEEN OUTSPOKENLY CRITICAL OF SOME LDP LEADERS' COZINESS WITH ROK AND ROC, AND HAS TOLD US HE DIFFERS WITH MODERATE SOCIALISTS, SUCH AS HIDEO DEN, ONLY IN THAT HE (KONO) UNABASHEDLY SUPPORTS FREE ECONOMY. EDUCATION HAS BEEN PRIME KONO CONCERN SINCE HIS DIET ENTRY AND NLC CONTINUES TO STRESS EDUCATION THEME HEAVILY. NOT SURPRISINGLY, NLC CRITICS HAVE FOUND ALL THIS UNACCEPTABLY VAGUE AND SMACKING OF CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 TOKYO 09898 01 OF 02 010847Z

MERE "PRAGMATISM." NLC IS, IN SHORT, CAMPAIGNING EXCLUSIVELY ON ITS--MORE SPECIFICALLY, KONO'S--IMAGE, NOT ITS POLICIES.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TOKYO 09898 02 OF 02 010938Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 AS-01 /069 W

-----020964 010943Z /21

P R 010810Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9091

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TOKYO 9898

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

6. DESPITE POLICY GAPS, PARTY HAS PLAYED SIGNIFICANT DIET ROLE FROM OUTSET. FOLLOWING KONO'S NOTICE THAT LDP WOULD NO LONGER EXERCISE SOLE DOMINION OVER DIET MANAGEMENT, NLC WAS IN FOREFRONT OF OPPOSITION PARTIES IN ESTABLISHING PRECEDENT OF REVISING BUDGET OVER OPPOSITION OF LDP LEADERSHIP AND FINANCE MINISTRY. NLC HAS SINCE OFFERED OR SUPPORTED AMENDMENTS TO SEVERAL CONTROVERSIAL LEGISLATIVE ITEMS, INCLUDING TERRITORIAL- WATERS EXTENSION AND OKINAWA LAND REGISTRATION BILLS. DESPITE AMATEURISHNESS OF MANY NLC DIET APPEARANCES (KONO EXCEPTED), THEY HAVE SHOWN EVEN THEIR SINGLE VOTE CAN BE DECISIVE IN SEVEN LOWER HOUSE COMMITTEES.

7. JULY UPPER HOUSE ELECTION PROSPECTS ARE ALSO BRIGHT. IN RECENT OPINION POLLS, NLC HAS TOPPED TEN PERCENT SUPPORT RATE, EXCEEDING THAT OF ALL OTHER PARTIES EXCEPT CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TOKYO 09898 02 OF 02 010938Z

LDP AND JSP. THERE ARE PROBLEMS, HOWEVER. FULLY HALF OF NLC NATIONWIDE VOTE IS EXPECTED TO COME FROM UNORGANIZED VOTERS AND NLC INSIDERS ADMIT IT IS PROBABLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DIVIDE TOTAL VOTE SUFFICIENTLY PRECISELY TO ELECT ALL FOUR OF PARTY'S NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY CANDIDATES. (WELL- KNOWN ECONOMIC PLANNER SABURO OKITA, AN ALMOST CERTAIN WINNER, MAY, FOR EXAMPLE, SIPHON OFF TOO MANY NLC VOTES.) NLC IS ALSO FACING STIFF COMPETITION IN EACH OF NINE PREFECTURAL CONSTITUTENCIES WHERE IT IS RUNNING CANDIDATES. NONETHELESS, KONO TOLD EMBOFFS LAST WEEK NLC HOPES TO WIN SIX TO EIGHT SEATS, WHICH IS BORNE OUT BY RECENT KYODO WIRE SERVICE ESTIMATE GIVING NLC SEVEN SEATS WITH POSSIBILITY OF TWO MORE. MOREOVER, ALTHOUGH FUNDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS PERSIST, NLC NOW HAS SOME SORT OF ORGANIZATION IN 41 OF JAPAN'S 47 PREFECTURES AND IS REPORTEDLY CONSIDERING PUTTING UP 80 CANDIDATES IN NEXT LOWER HOUSE ELECTION. (WE ARE TOLD KONO IS FULLY AWARE THAT HE TOOK ON SOME NLC STANDARD-BEARERS IN HASTE LAST FALL AND HE IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN TALENT HUNT TO REDRESS SITUATION.) FEELING HEAT, LDP LEADERSHIP JUNE 13 ISSUED FORMAL ATTACK ON NLC AND HAS CRITICIZED NLC SHARPLY IN CAMPAIGN SPEECHES.

8. LDP'S REACTION HELPS WITH WHAT NLC LEADERS HAVE TOLD US IS THEIR BASIC PROBLEM: TO ESTABLISH FIRMLY IDENTITY AS "OPPOSITION" CONSERVATIVE PARTY. THEY REASON THAT VAST BULK OF JAPANESE POPULATION IS NOW SATISFIED WITH STATUS QUO AND THAT NLC IDENTIFICATION WITH MOST IDEOLOGICALLY ORIENTED PARTIES OF OPPOSITION WOULD SHARPLY DIMINISH POTENTIAL SUPPORT BASE. ON OTHER HAND, PERSISTENT COOPERATION WITH

LDP, LET ALONE FORMAL POLICY SUPPORT, WOULD LEAD VOTERS TO PERCEIVE NLC AS GROUP OF UNCERTAIN YOUNG MEN COOPTED BY LDP. KONO HAS THEREFORE FREQUENTLY STATED THAT NLC
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TOKYO 09898 02 OF 02 010938Z

WILL PURSUE ITS OWN INDEPENDENT "OPPOSITION" CONSERVATIVE COURSE, REGARDLESS OF OTHER PARTIES' ACTIONS, FOR NEXT THREE OR FOUR YEARS. THIS STANCE IS REFLECTED IN NLC REFUSAL TO ENTER INTO ELECTION COOPERATION AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER PARTIES; IN ITS CAREFULLY CONSIDERED, EXPLICITLY AD HOC, COOPERATION WITH LDP IN DIET; AND IN ITS PARTY REGULATION THAT TOP NLC LEADERS MUST BE 55 YEARS OF AGE OR UNDER (RULING OUT CONCEIVABLE PARTY TAKEOVER BY ANY CURRENTLY RECOGNIZED LDP OR CENTRIST PARTY LEADER).

9. WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR U.S. INTERESTS? NLC INFLUENCE ON DIET LEGISLATION OF IMPORTANCE TO US IS SIGNIFICANT NOW AND LIKELY TO GROW. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT NLC, AS POTENTIAL COALITION PARTNER, WILL SOON HAVE A MARKEDLY GREATER VOICE AFFECTING OVERALL GOVERNMENT OPERATION. AS ONE OF JAPAN'S BARE HANDFUL OF CHARISMATIC POLITICAL LEADERS, KONO IS NOT ONLY KEY TO NLC SUCCESS BUT STRONG CONTENDER FOR PRIME MINISTERSHIP SOME DAY. BASED ON OUR TEN YEARS OF CLOSE CONTACT WITH KONO, WE HAVE NO DOUBT ABOUT HIS--OR HIS PARTY'S--BASIC FRIENDLINESS TOWARD US. AND, LDP CARPING TO CONTRARY NOTWITHSTANDING, IT IS PROBABLY FORTUNATE THAT IN THIS PERIOD OF LDP DECLINE, THAT NLC EXISTS TO ATTRACT SUPPORT WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE GO TO PARTIES LESS FAVORABLE TO OUR INTERESTS. ALL CONSIDERED, WE WOULD BE WISE TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH NLC AND ITS LEADER, YOHEI KONO.
MANSFIELD

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TOKYO09898
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770235-0233
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770796/aaaadfmj.tel
Line Count: 260
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fee1f071-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1978454
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW LIBERAL CLUB: ONE YEAR LATER SUMMARY: IN ITS FIRST YEAR, YOHEI KONO'S NEW LIBERAL CLUB HAS SCORED IMPRESSIVE ELECTION GAINS, PLAYED
TAGS: PINT, JA, (KONO, YOHEI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fee1f071-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009